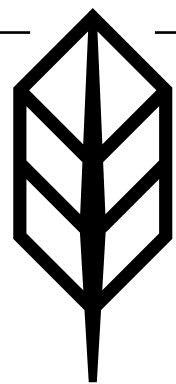


The Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County (PSABC) was formed in 1976, with interest in preservation sparked by observance of the US Bicentennial, and in response to threats to local buildings and sites posed by neglect, insensitive alteration, and large-scale transportation projects. Disinvestment in downtown, plans for the open cut through Beaucatcher Mountain, and a proposal to turn Montford Avenue into a through street connecting to U.S.19-23 spurred formation of the volunteer

group, which quickly incorporated and initiated work as a community non-profit. The Society advocated to City Council and County Commission to establish a joint city-county local landmark and historic district commission, to designate Montford as a local historic district, and to provide matching funds for local survey of historic buildings and sites. These actions made possible the historic designation of numerous sites and districts, and contributed to downtown revitalization and preservation of historic places county-wide.



# Pebbledash

PRESERVATION  
SOCIETY OF  
ASHEVILLE  
AND BUNCOMBE CO.

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF ASHEVILLE AND BUNCOMBE COUNTY

WINTER 2024

## \$200,000 in Hurricane Helene Preservation Grants Awarded

One of the first ways we jumped into action after the storm was to begin accepting applications for Hurricane Helene specific Preservation Grants. In less than one month, we awarded \$200,000 to 40 businesses and individuals impacted by the storm for bricks and mortar damage to their historic structures. Our goal was to get this money out as fast as possible while applicants might still be waiting for support from insurance and FEMA. We are proud of how quickly we were able to respond and we continue to fundraise in an effort to further expand the availability of these grants. Read about this project on page 5 of this Pebbledash. ☘



## SURVEY WORK BEGINS

Months after Hurricane Helene swept through WNC, it is still difficult to grasp the full scope of the impact. So with our mission in mind, we decided to begin the work of surveying the historic structures in Buncombe County. Initially, we began with the simple goal of getting a better understanding of where and how our services (technical support and grants) would be most useful.

In the weeks following the storm, staff ventured to every corner of the county to get a preliminary idea of what areas were hardest hit and what areas seemed to escape the worst of the storm. Next, we sent about a dozen volunteers out for a first round of survey work. This included photographing historic structures (50 years or older) and documenting any damage. From this experimental survey work, we were able to hone in on a process for the larger survey we hope to do.

At this point in the process we recognized the need to better define

the survey area. Because Swannanoa sustained a great deal of damage and had not had much survey work done previously, it became an obvious starting point. Botany Woods in east Asheville is also of interest, because of the number of homes lost that had just reached historic status in the last year or two. Finally, Montreat, which had just recently had its first ever survey of historic structures, was going to need to be revisited to determine how the storm impacted that work.

The goal now is to survey from Botany Woods east through Swannanoa, Black Mountain and Montreat with the work focusing along Highway 70 and waterways. With the help of volunteers, we expect this will take the next few months to complete.

A specific volunteer works from our office each week to create maps for volunteers in the field that include the addresses of each historic structure in a given area. Then teams of three volunteers

(a driver, note taker and photographer) do 2 - 3 hours of survey work at a time. These are windshield surveys, meaning teams do not leave the car. Every precaution is taken to ensure the safety of volunteers and comfort of individuals living in these communities.

In addition to the work our volunteers are doing, we are also sending more highly trained staff and volunteers to harder hit communities like the Beacon Mill Village. There, volunteers walked the community while documenting the damage and getting to know the residents. We are happy to say this outreach has led to a number of grants being awarded in this neighborhood.

By the end of this survey project, we hope to have a much better understanding about the impact of Hurricane Helene on our historic resources, documentation of places that have been lost and damaged, and a document that can live on to tell the story of this storm and the people and places it impacted. ☘

## 2024 TIME TRAVELING GALA CANCELED DUE TO STORM

On Thursday, September 26th, as staff and volunteers finished a long day preparing for the Time Traveling Gala, we were all anxious to get home in preparation for the coming storm. We had concerns about throwing the event after the storm, but with all the time and money that had been invested in our biggest event of the year, we made plans to push forward. Perhaps we would have a late start setting up on Friday to give time for the roads to be cleared...

*Looking back, it is crazy to think how wrong we were!*

Of course, when the extent of the damage started to become clear, canceling was an easy decision, but communicating without phones or internet, made it impossible.

We are so thankful to all of the people who worked so hard to make the Time Traveling Gala (not) happen - our sponsors and ticket holders who supported the event, our incredible vendors and our hardworking volunteers! Knowing that many of our guests might have been affected by the storm, we offered sponsors and ticket holders the option of a refund or making their purchase into a donation.

Because this year's venue, IntheOaks, is so special, we have decided to use it for the 2025 Time Traveling Gala! Sponsorships and tickets will go on sale in January and we will need your support more than ever! The Time Traveling Gala is our opportunity to fundraise for our Preservation Grants, and with the event canceled this year and our grant budget more than double - we need your support!

*Learn more details about the 2025 Time Traveling Gala on the back page of this newspaper.*



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# From the Executive Director



What is there to say? Honestly, I’ve been dreading writing this – and anything else about the terrible destruction that hit our region at the end of September. It’s nearly impossible to put into words the deep sadness, tentative hope or the millions of other feelings in-between. That said, our whole staff feels so lucky—that we are all safe, that our own homes escaped significant damage and that we have a job that allows us to spend our days finding ways to help.

We are a small organization, but our existing programming puts us in a unique position to jump right into storm recovery mode. Our incredible Board of Directors shared our vision for how we could make the biggest impact and we got to work.

Our annual Preservation Grant funding was extended from \$50,000 to \$100,000 and our annual unplanned programmatic fund was extended from \$10,000 to \$20,000, which was quickly put to work purchasing generators and dehumidifiers for those in need. Our Preservation Grant Committee started working overtime to review grants within a day or two of receiving them so we could get the funds out as soon as possible.

On the very morning that we exhausted our \$100,000 in grant funds, as staff was struggling to draft an email letting applicants know that the funding was gone, we received word of a \$50,000 gift from the Community Foundation of WNC. Just after we closed the grant round at \$150,000, a generous donation from an anonymous donor allowed us to extend the program to a whopping \$200,000! Individuals sent us checks from \$25-\$10,000, everyone participated in a way that was meaningful to them.

It is just a drop in the bucket for the unimaginable scope of the need, but we are here, lending a hand or a shoulder to cry on and we are going to keep working hard to heal our community.

With love and admiration,

Jessie Landl  
Executive Director

## OUR WORK

- Preservation Grants to support preservation, education and designation projects.
- Preservation Easements and Advocacy to protect endangered properties.
- Technical Support for owners of historic properties.
- Hosting the Griffin Awards to recognize projects that have utilized a preservation ethic.
- Preservation Education Programs to inform the community about our shared history.

## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT PRESERVATION

- Become a member and receive valuable information about the history and preservation of Asheville & Buncombe County.
- Volunteer for PSABC and utilize your skills to increase the capacity of our preservation work.
- Donate a preservation easement on your historic property and confidently know that it will be permanently protected.
- Become a sponsor of our programming, including our series of Preservation Education Programs.
- Contact us to confidentially discuss your estate planning goals and how those goals can support historic preservation.

*Special thanks to our members and sponsors who provide the financial support of our mission.*

# PSABC Board & Staff

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# Historic Building Resilience

When we think of the main threats to our historic buildings, we typically think of deterioration, development, and demolition. But our historic buildings are routinely and increasingly threatened by natural disasters. As we all saw in the days and weeks following Hurricane Helene, many of our historic buildings and neighborhoods have significant damage from flooding, wind, falling trees, and mudslides. Many of these historic buildings have survived past floods and hurricanes because historic building materials are often naturally more resistant to rot and water damage than many modern building materials, but as the storms are becoming more intense and increasing in frequency, steps can be taken to make our historic buildings more resilient.

Preservationists across the country are seeking the best way to maintain a building’s historic character while combating the negative impact natural disasters have on historic buildings. As the leader of developing standards and guidelines for preservation work, the National Park Service in 2019 developed the text for *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, which was expanded in 2021 to the current guidelines. These guidelines were produced in response to requests for technical preservation guidance specific to historic properties that are at risk of flooding.

In North Carolina, a team of individuals from North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with support from the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office and Department of Natural and Cultural Resources came together to develop the *Historic Resilience Project*. The project seeks to equip the local communities throughout North Carolina with resources to address the natural threats to our historic buildings. The *Historic Resilience Project* includes three inter-related resources:

- The Historic Resilience Primer, a general introduction for North Carolina communities

- The Community Planning Handbook, a guide for community conversations and prioritization
- The Resilience Design Standards, model design standards for historic resilience

While the Resilience Design Standards have not been officially adopted by Asheville’s Historic Resources Commission, there have been ongoing conversations to adopt them.

The thought of repairing and rehabilitating our historic buildings after such an unprecedented disaster can be overwhelming, but when you are ready, these standards can provide guidance on how to rebuild in a more resilient way. PSABC is here to help you now and in the future to develop resilience strategies for your historic property.

## Links to Resources

**The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings**  
<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/flood-adaptation-guidelines-2021.pdf>

**North Carolina Historic Resilience Project**  
<https://hrp.sog.unc.edu/>



# Historic Preservation & Recovery Resources



**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE** (<https://www.hpo.nc.gov/restoration-services/disaster-preparedness-and-response>) has advice for owners of historic buildings, drying out a flooded building, making insurance claims, and making post-disaster repairs.



For time-sensitive guidance in responding to emergencies where your personal items of historic or cultural value have been damaged, you can email the **NATIONAL HERITAGE RESPONDERS** at [NHRpublichelpline@culturalheritage.org](mailto:NHRpublichelpline@culturalheritage.org). Institutions who are impacted by emergencies can call the National Heritage Responders emergency hotline at 202-661-8068.



**FEMA** provides helpful guidance on Saving Your Family Treasures, which can be found at <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/recover/save-family-treasures>. For more information on FEMA and the Smithsonian’s co-sponsored Heritage Emergency National Task Force (HENTF), visit <https://culturalrescue.si.edu/who-we-are/hentf>. HENTF is made up of more than 60 institutions and provides support for cultural heritage emergency preparedness and response.



**NORTHEAST DOCUMENT CONSERVATION CENTER’S** “Salvage at a Glance” is helpful for any cultural heritage institution for rapid collections salvage but can also be useful to individuals with some basic experience. It can be found here: <https://www.nedcc.org/assets/media/documents/dPlan/0101-salvageataglanceC2C2013.pdf>



**NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION** (<https://savingplaces.org/disaster-recovery>) has advice for historic property owners following a disaster. They also have tips for bringing historic properties back following a flood (<https://savingplaces.org/stories/10-tips-for-bringing-historic-properties-back-from-a-flood>).



**MAIN STREET AMERICA** (<https://mainstreet.org/resources/knowledge-hub/toolkit/main-street-disaster-and-resilience-toolkit>) has a toolkit to help plan for, prepare, and recover from a natural disaster. Part 3 (page 55) of the report focuses on response and recovering.

For links to above resources please visit [psabc.org/hurricane-helene-recovery/](https://psabc.org/hurricane-helene-recovery/)



# Beacon Village



By Dale W. Slusser  
Architectural Historian

## Building A Southern Mill Village

*“More than 1,000,000 new spindles were added to the Southern textile mills in 1924 and 1925. While Eastern and Northern capitalists continue to purchase established plants and erect new mills, Southern capital is being employed for building new mills and expanding established ones in increasing volume,”* reported the October 1926 issue of *Manufacturers Record*.<sup>1</sup> One of those new mills that was then being erected was Beacon Manufacturing’s new plant at Swannanoa, NC, twelve miles east of Asheville, NC.

In 1904, Charles D. Owen and his son, Charles D. Owen, Jr., along with a cousin, bought the defunct Beacon Manufacturing Company in New Bedford, Massachusetts (executive offices in Providence, R. I.). The company made cotton flannel bed blankets and bath robes, and later added infant blankets to their product line. In 1915, at the death Charles D. Owen, the company had almost 1,000 employees, and by 1919, the company had over 1,600 employees.<sup>2</sup> But facing increasing union pressure at the plant in New Bedford, and in an effort to cut his labor costs, Charles D. Owen, Jr., like many other Northern textile mill owners, decided to look southward. And to that end, in 1924 Owen purchased several hundred acres, adjacent to the town of Swannanoa, NC on which to build a new textile plant.<sup>3</sup> *“Ground was Broken”*<sup>4</sup> on July 12, 1924, commencing construction of Beacon’s new Swannanoa facility.

Architect/Engineer, Knight C. Richmond, of Providence, Rhode Island, who had designed the original New Bedford plant, was hired to design the new plant at Swannanoa. Knight Cheney Richmond, came from a textile owners’ family. Richmond’s grandfather, George M. Richmond, in 1866, just before his death, had obtained controlling ownership of Crompton Mills near Providence, RI. The Richmond family would subsequently dominate the company for many years. Knight Richmond’s uncle, Frank Richmond was appointed the president of the company in 1866, and another uncle, Howard Richmond was hired as the treasurer.<sup>5</sup> Knight Richmond was two years old when his family took over Crompton Mills, so not surprisingly, after working for his family’s mill for a few years, as a young man, Knight enrolled at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating in 1890 with a B. S. in Mechanical Engineering.<sup>6</sup>

Although not germane to our story, after graduating from MIT, Knight Richmond “entered the office of Nier, Hartford, and Mitchell in Chattanooga, Tenn., as a draftsman. The following year he became treasurer of the P. A. Demens Woodworking Co. at Asheville, N.C., where he remained for two years.”<sup>7</sup> However, the company went into receivership in 1892. Knight Richmond and his future father-in-law James Monroe Campbell were two of the three claimants who received favorable judgements in the receivership against the P. A. Demens Woodworking Company. Richmond for \$600 and Campbell for \$11,000.<sup>8</sup> Knight Richmond immediately moved back to Providence, RI. However, he briefly returned in January 1896 to marry his bride, Miss Phebe Ann Campbell. The couple was married at “Oakdale”, the Campbell family home in “Victoria” (now the St. Dunstan’s Circle area in Asheville). Also, Knight & Phebe Richmond’s names, along with her parents’, are on the deed of a property transfer to Eugene Sawyer in 1898. Eugene Sawyer was buying the “J. M. Campbell Building” at 18 Church Street in downtown Asheville. Campbell had built the building in 1895.

By 1924, Knight Cheney Richmond, had become a noted “*Mill Architect and Engineer*”<sup>9</sup> (as he advertised himself in 1904), based in Providence, RI. He specialized in “slow-burning construction”, which used heavy timber and masonry as fire-resistant materials, especially suitable for textile mill construction. Heavy timber posts with thick timber flooring were used instead of light-weight framing lumber (studs and joists). Even today in our modern building codes, heavy timber construction has a higher fire-resistance rating than steel construction, as the heavy timber quickly chars and slows down the burning of the timber, whereas a steel member will melt or “fail” long before a heavy timber member will fail. Also, Richmond designed his factory buildings to be built of “*a saw-tooth type construction*”<sup>10</sup>, meaning that they were constructed with each section of the factory hav-

ing a clerestory roof, sloped up to the north, allowing natural northern light and ventilation to penetrate the interior of the factory.

In conjunction with the building of the new factory at Swannanoa, Beacon Manufacturing also decided to build an accompanying “mill village” to house his workers (then called “operatives”), several of which initially moved down from New Bedford. Beacon Manufacturing hired the premier “mill village” designer, landscape architect, E. S. Draper to design the new village. This included the design and layout of the streets, lots, and utilities.

Earle Sumner Draper had a similar background to architect Knight Richmond- he was born and educated in Massachusetts, and he came from a prominent textile mill owning family. Earle S. Draper was born in Falmouth, MA on October 19, 1893 to photographer Frederick Ward Draper and his wife Bertha Sumner Draper.<sup>11</sup> Thomas Draper (Earle’s great grandfather) and his brother James began manufacturing knit goods in 1851, in the old Withington house at the corner of Pleasant Street and Washington Street in Canton, Massachusetts. Thomas Draper died on May 29, 1856 and his son Charles Draper (Earle’s grandfather) took his place. Meanwhile, James Draper, Thomas

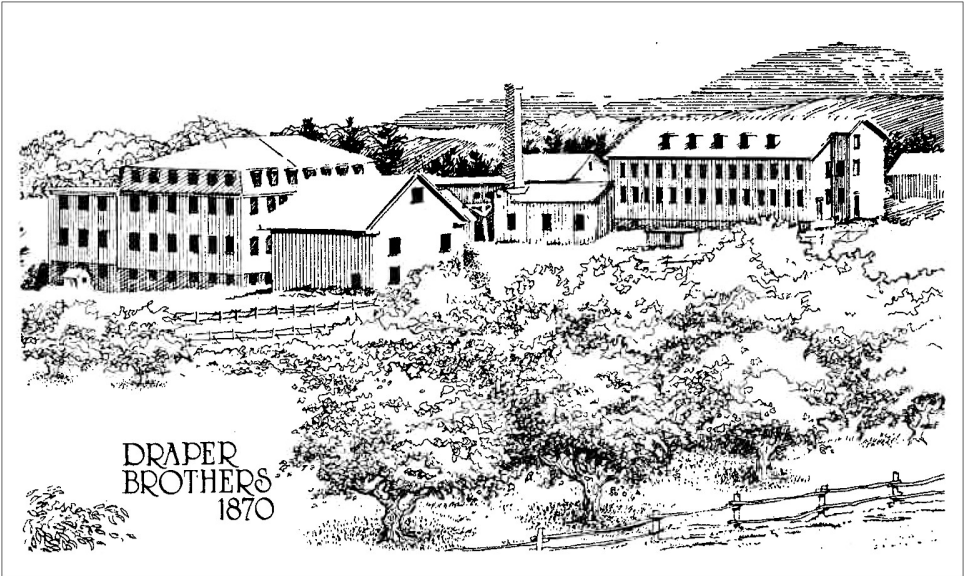
Draper’s brother and business partner—at first having decided to move back to England following Thomas’ death, but convinced by his family to stay—Draper decided to form his own textile mill business utilizing a knitting machine that he had constructed for himself. In 1861, James Draper took on George F. Sumner as a partner and the firm was called Draper and Sumner. In 1865, they purchased the Morse Machine Works in South Canton, and in 1869 bought the failed Canton Woolen Mills, which had been operated by his nephew Charles (Earle’s grandfather). After James Draper died in 1873, his sons took over the business. They dissolved the partnership with George Sumner and in 1875 renamed the business Draper Brothers, which in 1889 was incorporated under the name of Draper Brothers Company.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, Earle Sumner Draper received his middle name from his mother’s maiden name, not from his great-uncle’s business partner George F. Sumner. Both the Draper and Sumner families were prominent and prolific families in Massachusetts since the eighteenth-century. Earle S. Draper’s grandfather and great-great uncles’ company, the Draper Brothers, founded in the 1870’s is still in business (2024) as the Draper Knitting Company, and is run by the 6th generation of the Draper family, with Kristin Draper as its President, Marketing & Development Manager.

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E. S. Draper graduated with a B.S. in landscape architecture from the Massachusetts Agricultural College, (now the University of Massachusetts at Amherst) in 1915.<sup>13</sup> After college, he was hired by John Nolen, the premier city planner of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Nolen sent him south to Charlotte, North Carolina, to be the firm’s representative for its southern projects: Myers Park subdivision, in Charlotte and the town planning of the new town of Kingsport, Tennessee. In 1917, Draper, who had settled in Myers Park (where he built a family home) established his own firm in Charlotte, specializing in upper-class residential neighborhoods and mill villages.<sup>14</sup>

*“The landscape architecture is the least appreciated and understood of professions”*<sup>15</sup>, stated E. S. Draper, during his speech as the guest speaker at a conference of the American Society of Landscape Architects (which then only had 145 members) in New York City, in January of 1924. Draper went on to report that, *“landscape architecture in his home state had brought about the greatest evolution in the social life of the working man there in the last decade.”*<sup>16</sup> Elaborating further, *“The speaker described improvements made through his plans upon the homes of employees of 150 textile mills throughout the south, by which more than 75,000 working persons had benefited. Many of the workers, he [Draper] said, came from the mountains where they were accustomed to almost inconceivable living conditions.”*<sup>17</sup>

Earle S. Draper’s great-grandfather, Thomas Draper and great uncle, James Draper formed the Draper Brothers textile mill in Canton, Massachusetts in the 1870’s. The company is still in business as the Draper Knitting Company, and is run by the 6th generation of the Draper family, with Kristin Draper as its President, Marketing & Development Manager.



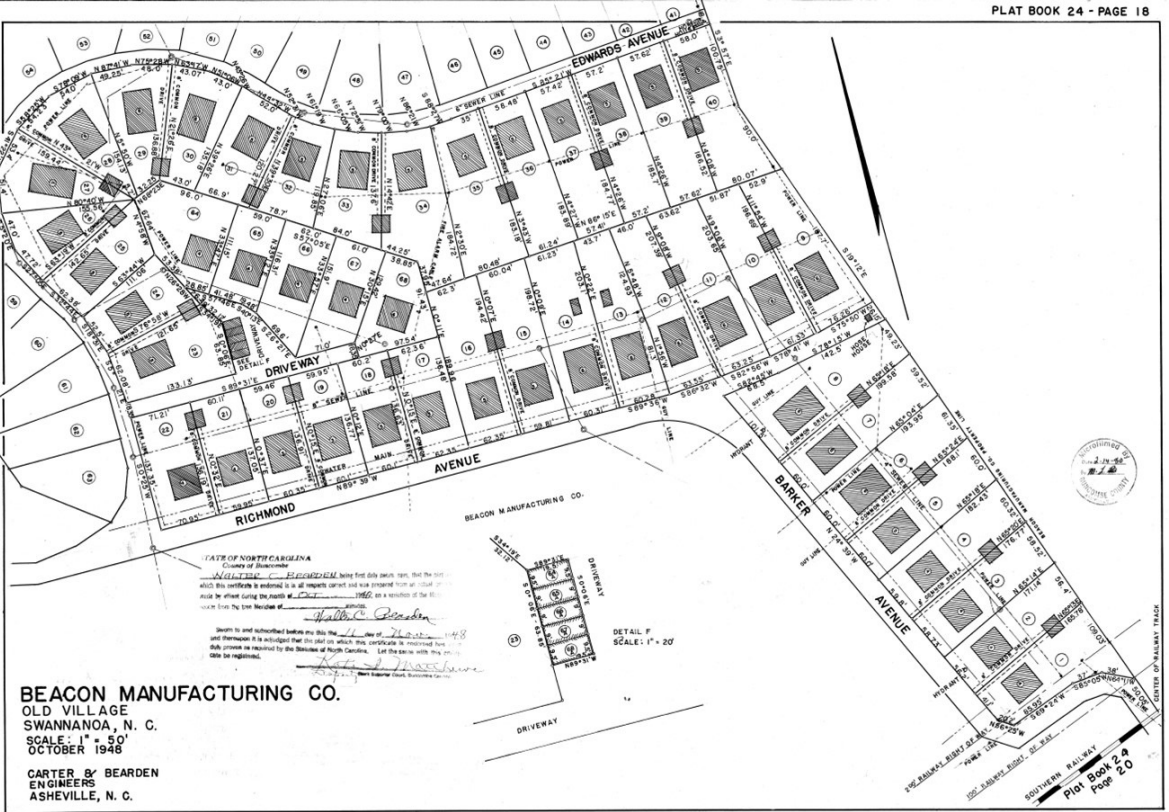
In his article titled “Southern Textile Village Planning” in the October 1927 edition of *Landscape Architecture* magazine, E. S. Draper gives us a glimpse into his design principles and methodology for designing and building an ideal “mill village”. Draper prefaces his remarks by saying that, *“... there are 1,200 textiles mills in the South at the present time, employing several hundred thousand workers.”*<sup>18</sup> In general, the requirements for planning a “new southern textile village”, says Draper, *“are practically the same as any lotting or subdivision development”*, such as designing the topography of streets and lots to handle adequate drainage and circulation. Specific to the planning of a textile village, Draper notes is that: *“It is quite important that the streets and pathways be laid out to give direct and adequate circulation to and from the mill village center, and to the adjoining town and center.”*<sup>19</sup> One of the reasons for the importance of locating the village close to the mill, says Draper, is that *“practically all the workers return to their homes for the noonday meal, and the majority of them walk.”*<sup>20</sup> As far as providing easy access from the mill village to the adjoining town, in the case of the Beacon plant, this was easy to accomplish as “downtown” Swannanoa was literally adjacent to the mill village, and already had established shops and train station. Draper also advocates for the village to have their own community center housing a general store and a second floor “*lodge hall*” (meeting room), and their own churches of the various denominations.

continued on the next page



Earle Sumner Draper- from a group photograph of the American Society of Landscape Architects, Cleveland, Ohio, 1929.

Analyzing the lots that Draper designed for Beacon Village, using this plat of part of the lower village, we see that they generally have a frontage of between 55-to 65 ft and a depth variation between 115-to 200 ft. Of course, the narrower frontage is due to the fact that Draper in his article had used 35 ft as the house width, but as in Beacon Village, the narrower the house, the smaller the frontage can be. Also, notice the garages behind the houses, and the group garages on the street named “Driveway”.





By October 1924, just three months after the factory ground-breaking, this photo appeared in the Asheville Citizen-Times showing the first ten houses of the Beacon Village already having been erected, along Edwards Avenue.

In his 1899 ground-breaking tome (380 pages), Cotton Mill- Commercial Features, Daniel Thompkins' design titled, "Three-Room Gable House" (plan above left and photo top right), seems to have been the design inspiration for the Beacon Village houses. Thompkins' three-room design was adapted into four-room and five-room house types at Beacon Village. The Beacon houses (lower right) differ from Thompkins' design in their roof style, in that instead of the side gable at the front and shed roofs for its porches, the Beacon houses are each completely covered by one hipped roof (with Dutch vent-gables, front and back). The Sayles Bleachery mill village 3-room house (middle right), both in plan and elevations, closely matches Thompkins' 1899 design, except of course that they are rendered in a "modern" Arts & Crafts' bungalow style, with shallower-sloped roofs.



Draper also advocates for concrete sidewalks with a planting strip between it and the street, "because of the amount of walking done in the village, and the advisability of keeping dirt out of the mill".<sup>21</sup> However, he did not utilize either in the Beacon village.

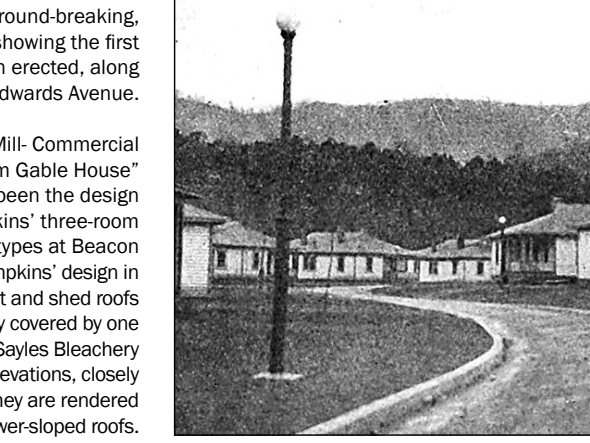
In his article on textile mill village planning, Draper also discusses lot sizes. He says that the "average bungalow lots in southern textile villages are from 65-to 75-ft. frontage and 125 to 175 feet deep, 150 feet being the average depth."<sup>22</sup> Two determining factors for the lot sizes, says Draper, are first that the insurance premiums are higher if the houses are less than thirty feet apart, and second that "the operatives themselves are not used to living close together and want a certain amount of yard space."<sup>23</sup> Analyzing the lots that Draper designed for Beacon Village, we see that they generally have a frontage of between 55-to 65 ft and a depth variation between 115-to 200 ft. Of course, the narrower frontage is due to the fact that Draper in his article had used 35 ft as the house width, but as in Beacon Village, the narrower the house, the smaller the frontage can be.

Although Beacon's mill village was designed for ease in walking to and from the mill, it was also designed for automobiles, not only with its paved streets but also providing garages for each house. In most of the houses, double garages were built between every other house, providing a driveway and garage on each side for the adjoining houses. In a few cases, due to lot constraints, group garages were provided nearby.

By the time construction began on the Beacon factory at Swannanoa, a contract had already been let to the Jackson-Campbell Company of Asheville to design and build fifty houses<sup>24</sup>, as the start of the new mill village. Jackson-Campbell Company, renamed from the Grove Park Construction Company, was established in 1924 by business partners, Linwood B. Jackson and W. R. Campbell (apparently, no relation to the J. M. Campbell mentioned earlier). Both men were also active in other businesses- L. B. Jackson (then only 27 years old) was at the time building his modern office skyscraper in downtown Asheville, and W. R. Campbell was the sales manager for E. W. Grove Investments. Incidentally, W. R. Campbell was the "buyers' agent" for Beacon Manufacturing when they acquired the Swannanoa property. By October 1924, just three months after the factory ground-breaking ceremony, a photo appeared in the Asheville Citizen-Times showing the first ten houses of the Beacon Village already having been erected, along Edwards Avenue.<sup>25</sup>

Apparently, E. S. Draper did not design the houses in his planned mill villages, however he did provide general guidelines as to their style and sizes. In his 1927 article, he addresses the design of "the typical mill village bungalow"<sup>26</sup> Draper writes: "The bungalow or cottage type of house is most suitable, not only from a climatic standpoint, in that the rooms on the ground floor are cooler, but because of the fact that the village people on account of having lived in mountain or rural cottages, have never been accustomed to climbing stairs, and will not do so when it can be avoided".<sup>27</sup> Draper also further describes the typical size and layout of the typical mill house: "This normally includes hallway, kitchen, dining room or dining alcove, living room, bathroom, and several bedrooms in the six-room house. In the four-room house the hallway may or may not be included and the dining room is usually a living room as well".<sup>28</sup> Although today we describe house sizes either by their area (square footage) or by the number of bedrooms and bathrooms or both-i.e. "a three-bedroom, 2 bath, 1,800 sf...", but in the late-nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century, houses were simply described by the number of overall rooms (which usually did not include bathrooms or closets).

Draper's description, as well as the design of the "typical mill village house", and for that matter Draper's design concepts for the layout of the typical mill village, all were building on the pioneering work of Daniel Thompkins (also of Charlotte, NC). In his 1899, ground-breaking tome (380 pages), Cotton Mill- Commercial Features, Thompkins presented many progressive improvements for designing and building modern textile mills, mill villages, and mill houses (which he calls, "operatives' homes")<sup>29</sup>. "It was formerly the custom to build for operatives long rows of houses exactly alike, and in most cases adjoining one another. But it has transpired that this is not the best plan", advocated Thompkins, as "Different families have different tastes, and as operatives grow in intelligence and prosperity, this differentiation in taste becomes more marked".<sup>30</sup> Thompkins went



The Beacon Blanketeers and Beacon Manufacturing officials pose on Nolan Field at the Opening-day game on April 5, 1930. The newly built brick mill houses, along Dennis Street show in the background.



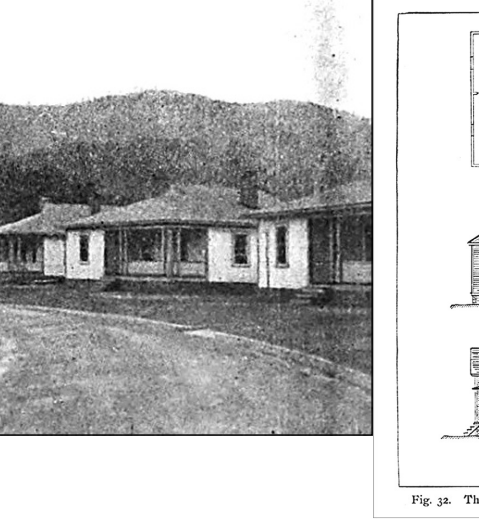
on to provide engravings of designs which he recommended for various sizes of mill houses. Interestingly, the mill houses built at Beacon Village (twenty-five years after Thompkins publication), closely resemble, especially in plan, Thompkins' design titled, "Three-Room Gable House".<sup>31</sup> At Beacon Village, Thompkins' three-room design was adapted into four-room and five-room house types. For the four-room house type at Beacon Village, another room was added behind the living room, giving the house a living

room, eat-in kitchen, and two bedrooms. Of course, all the Beacon Village houses had the added convenience of a modern indoor bathroom with running water and sewer services. The five-room house which was built at Beacon Village also followed Thompkins' design, with the addition of a third room on the gabled side of the house, giving the house a living room, eat-in kitchen, and three bedrooms. The Beacon houses differ from Thompkins' design in their roof style, in that instead of the side gable at the front and shed roofs for its porches, the Beacon houses are each completely covered by one hipped roof (with Dutch vent-gables, front and back). Just an interesting note- at the Draper-designed Sayles Bleachery mill village, then being built in nearby Asheville, the "3-room" (living room, eat-in kitchen, and one bedroom) mill house looks very similar, both in plan and elevations, to Thompkins' 1899 design for a "Three-Room Gable House", except of course that they are rendered in a "modern" Arts & Crafts' bungalow style, with shallower-sloped roofs.

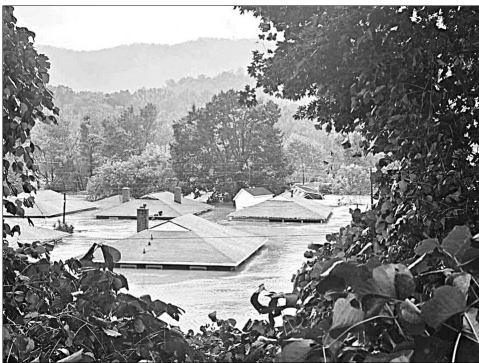
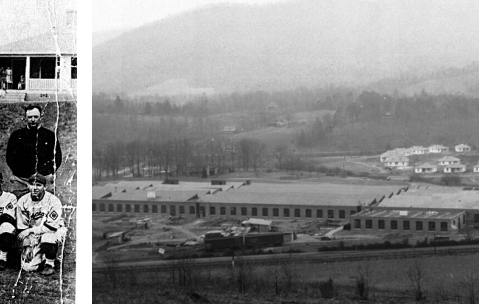
A unique feature of the Beacon Mill Village houses, was their interior finish, as all the walls and ceilings were finished out with horizontal beaded boards. Interiors finished with wood boards instead of plaster was prevalent in Western North Carolina during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, especially in rural areas. The main reason

for this was the lack of skilled plasterers and the lack of money for a homeowner to hire them. Conversely, there was both an abundance of wood and of local sawmills dotting the country. Of course, the other advantage to wood walls was that they could be installed by unskilled workers or homeowners. In the case of the houses at Beacon Village, I suspect the use of wood walls was used as a cost-savings measure over hiring plasterers, and perhaps also as a time-saving measure. The initial building of the first houses, as well as the subsequent building of the mill houses were always connected with an accompanying addition to the mill, which coincided with the hiring of more workers requiring more housing.

The start of the Beacon Manufacturing plant at Swannanoa and its accompanying mill village, was followed four years later, in 1928,



This early photo (c. 1920's), shows the first phases of Beacon Manufacturing Company's mill and mill village at Swannanoa, NC. The saw-tooth roof construction of the one story mill clearly shows in the photo. The houses of the first phases of the mill village, now called the "lower village", show in front of the mill to the north.

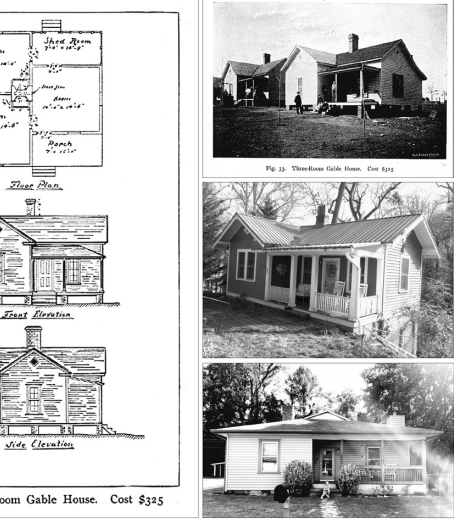


by another company building boom. Beacon Manufacturing announced that it was going to literally double the size of their Swannanoa plant, and at the same time double the size of the mill village to accommodate the new workers it would be hiring. No doubt the expansion at the Swannanoa plant was prompted by increasing labor troubles at the New Bedford plant in Massachusetts. Less than a month after Beacon's announcement, a massive strike began in New Bedford. The New Bedford Cotton Manufacturers' Association, representing mill owners from twenty-six textile mills in and around New Bedford, announced that it planned to cut wages by 10% to keep in competition with southern mills. Over 30,000 laborers, in New Bedford, initially represented by the New Bedford Textile Council (the union of skilled workers), stopped working on April 16th, 1928. The strike not only became contentious, fueled by communist-party representatives, but it lasted for six months, finally ending after the union members accepted a 5% pay cut in October 1918. Fortunately, the Beacon Manufacturing Company was able to avoid being involved in the massive strike. Remarkably, and adroitly, the owners of the Beacon Manufacturing Company, just before the April 16<sup>th</sup> strike was called, were able to convince their employees to withdraw from the New Bedford Textile Council (the union). Beacon Mill further announced that they would be "conducted as an open shop", with "its operatives accepting the ten percent wage reduction".<sup>32</sup>

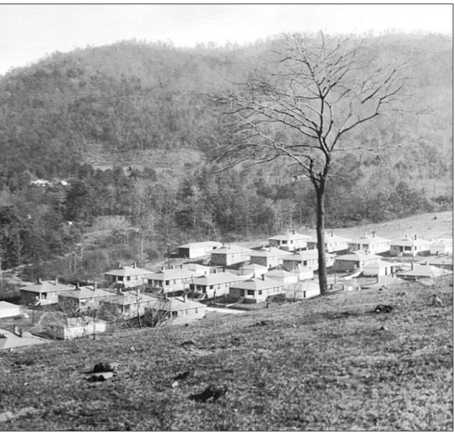
The 1928 expansion of the Beacon Mill village at Swannanoa included the addition of fifty more houses- four room houses, five-room houses and six-room houses.<sup>33</sup> The new expansion was designed again by architect/engineer Knight Richmond. It is unclear who designed the houses; however, it is most likely that they were built from the 1924 plans and built on the remaining vacant lots laid out by E. S. Draper in 1924.

Just a few months later, in the Spring of 1929, Beacon Manufacturing announced yet another wave of expansion to the mill and the village. The village expansion included the addition of 42 new homes, all to be built "south of the mill", which was on land behind the mill and across the railroad line. The new section of the village was later referred to as the "upper village". Judging from the grid pattern of the new streets, its layout was most

likely not part of Draper's original landscape plan. The 42 "houses" included 10 four-room houses, 10 five-room houses, and 20 duplexes.<sup>34</sup> The 20 single-family houses followed the same established floor plans, however, instead of being clad in wood siding, they were clad in a veneer of brick. The duplexes, also to be clad in brick veneer, were a new type of house for Beacon village. Each duplex housed two families, separated by a center wall. Topped by a single hipped roof, at first glance each duplex, appears to be a single bungalow. Each side of the duplex consisted of a front porch, and three consecutive "shot-gun" style rooms: living room, bedroom, and kitchen (with an adjoining bath). Each side



This close-up from an early panoramic photo of Beacon Village shows the brick houses and duplexes that were built in 1929 and 1933, in the "upper village", south of the mill. Judging from the grid pattern of the new streets, its layout was most likely not part of Draper's original landscape plan.



In September 2024, during hurricane Helene, the flood waters submerged the Beacon Village houses up to their roofs. Although the houses were left standing after the flood waters receded, only 11 houses of the 77 houses in the lower village remained inhabitable.

In September 2024, during hurricane Helene, the flood waters submerged the Beacon Village houses up to their roofs. Although the houses were left standing after the flood waters receded, only 11 houses of the 77 houses in the lower village remained inhabitable.

was a three-room house, suitable only for singles, newlyweds, or childless couples! The construction of the 42 houses was contracted out to the Black Mountain Lumber Company.

The 1929 mill and village expansion at Beacon's Swannanoa plant was just finishing when the "Great Crash" hit in October of 1929. However, it did not affect Beacon's expansion, as in December of 1929, the company announced that in addition to erecting two new warehouses, it was also going to "construct a concrete highway between the two mill villages at Swannanoa".<sup>35</sup> All this new work was in preparation for the hiring of 100 new workers, to be hired January 1, 1930.

The final project of the 1929 expansion at Beacon Village was construction of the James H. Nolan Baseball Park. The opening day at the new employee baseball park, named after Beacon's auditor and baseball enthusiast, James Nolan, was on April 5, 1930. The new field was built south of the mill on the east side of Dennis Street in the upper village. The location is now the site of a new residential street named Nolan Field Lane.

As the Great Depression set in, the Beacon Mill at Swannanoa continued production, providing work for its 320 employees. However, Beacon Manufacturing's plant in New Bedford, MA was struggling to survive, resulting in its closing in April 1933. Beacon Mill owners C. D. Owen, Sr. and his son C. D. Owen, Jr. announced that although they were not abandoning the New Bedford plant, as it was only "temporarily closed",<sup>36</sup> they would have the machinery from the New England plant shipped down and installed at the Swannanoa plant.<sup>37</sup> No expansion of the plant was anticipated as the machinery was to be installed in the "considerable unused floor space in the buildings at Swannanoa".<sup>38</sup> However, in the end, a 70,000 sf one-story addition to the factory was constructed in 1933 to house the new machinery.

Although Beacon Manufacturing promised that no supervisors or superintendents would be hired or brought down from the New Bedford plant, the increased machinery did require increased employment. To meet the increase in workers, Beacon Manufacturing decided to build 15 new 4-room and 5-room brick houses in 1933. Black Mountain Lumber Company again was hired as the contractor for the new houses. Also in 1933, Beacon Manufacturing announced a wage increase for its 450 employees and that with the additional machinery and the initiation of two 40-hour shifts it would soon be hiring 300 more employees.<sup>39</sup> "Beacon Blankets" continued to be produced during the Great Depression years. In fact by 1936, Beacon Manufacturing had 1,600 employees, boasting the "the biggest payroll in the history of the Swannanoa plant".<sup>40</sup> In 1937, Beacon Manufacturing purchased the Oconee Mills in Westminster, SC. The company used Oconee Mills to produce yarn to be used for the blanket making operations at Swannanoa.<sup>41</sup>

The 1940's brought with it new challenges, yet new benefits for Beacon Manufacturing and its employees and mill village. In the early 1940's the Beacon plant and mill village gained easier access to its facilities when the





# Announcing Hurricane Helene Recovery Preservation Grant Awardees

Awardees are listed roughly in order of their approval date. Some homeowners have chosen not to be identified by name, but have allowed us to share their experiences.



## GARDENER'S COTTAGE

Biltmore Village, 34 All Souls Crescent, c.1925

- The Gardener's Cottage is a contributing structure in the Biltmore Village local historic district. Formerly the home of Charlie "Choo Choo" Justice (famous Asheville football player), this building is "one of only three c.1920s structures left which complied with Edith Vanderbilt's deed restrictions from her sale of the village."
- Per the owner's grant application: "the structure is one of three historic properties moved and saved from demolition in the 1980s. It is an important asset to the cultural tourism created along Highway 25 (previously All Souls Crescent). The Gardener's Cottage has occupied this building for more than 20 years and has a loyal following in Asheville and Biltmore Forest."

## ASHEVILLE COTTON MILL

River Arts District, 122 Riverside Drive, c.1900

- According to property owner Jannette Montenegro, "the historical significance alone of the structure is important. The Cotton Mill is a survivor. She survived the 1916 flood, the 1995 fires and now the 2024 flood."
- She continues: "To the River Arts District and the community, this space was home. Local musicians played live 6 nights a week at the Asheville Guitar Bar, photographers have made use of the lighting and brick walls for many a portrait session and photography and video shoots. Artists show their work and allow community members and tourists to watch them making their art. The AVLArts arts trolley had a permanent stop here. To members of the Latinx community Guajiro and El Patio was a bit of home. Customers would flock daily for the Cuban Coffee shots at Guajiro and local salsa and tango clubs would host dance events there. El Patio was also home to the newly formed Asheville Social Club. The Cotton Mill also served as an information stop about the history of the district. We had informational panels outside in our garden and large pictures of the history of the building inside to teach visitors the history of the space. This space is home to many community members but also a hub for economic development and growth for the River Arts District and The City of Asheville."

## REYNOLDS MANSION

Woodfin, 1847

- Reynolds Mansion has been an easement property of PSABC since 2008. According to owner Paul Manshon, "it is one of the oldest properties in the area, was built in 1847 and the original structure is brick and mortar. It was also the home of Senator Robert Rice Reynolds, with ownership having passed down from his grandfather, Col. Daniel Reynolds, to his father William Taswell Reynolds and then to William Taswell's younger brother, Nathaniel Augustus Reynolds."
- Paul stresses that "this property is important to us and we believe it has significant historical value and importance to Asheville and Buncombe County in general. Due to its age and prior neglect over the course of its lifetime, there is always a long list of maintenance items that are expensive and cost prohibitive to attempt all at once."

## THE CORNER KITCHEN

Biltmore Village, 3 Boston Way, c.1895

- Operating as a restaurant since 2004, the Corner Kitchen is a contributing structure to the Biltmore Village Cottage National Register Historic District and the local historic district.
- Owner Joe Scully says that rehabilitating the historic structure will require a "complete rebuild, possible lifting of the building, replace[ment] of all equipment and refrigeration. The timeline is TBD as we are currently drying the building...We anticipate completion in about 6+ months."

## THE BULL & BEGGAR

River Arts District, 37 Payne's Way, c.1915

- The Bull & Beggar fine dining restaurant in the River Arts District took on three feet of water during the storm. According to owner Drew Wallace, "We've already begun remediation to be done by Premier Remediation Co. contracted by Falcon Development (currently in progress), and the subsequent restoration to be completed by Dröm Construction. Construction is slated to begin next week and materials include: wood, tile, drywall, and FRP."
- Wallace emphasizes that the Wedge Studios building they are located in "has a rich history- it houses the original art studios of the River Arts District, as well as the first brewery in the neighborhood."

## SOUTHERN HIGHLAND CRAFT GUILD

Biltmore Village, 26 Lodge Street, c.1929

- The structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Southern Highland Craft Gallery that was located in the building supports 800 craft artisans, primarily from WNC.
- According to the Craft Guild, "funds applied toward the cost of boarding up the building for security, mucking out the mud, pumping out the water from the basement, pressure washing anything the 16 feet of water came in touch with, and finally air drying-out the building. Significant damage also occurred to the windows."

## PRIVATE RESIDENCE

West Asheville, c.1930

- This home was directly in the flooding of Hominy Creek, a tributary of the French Broad River. Homeowner Kara Warren reports that the "entire basement was full of rushing water at least 4 feet over the floor. Many items were swept away in the water. Everything else is covered in a layer of hazardous river sludge."

## PRIVATE RESIDENCE

Swannanoa, c.1961

- Homeowner Bill Wescott describes how his "two younger ones are staying with family for the most part while we work on our 1960's home after it was damaged from the Helene flood. I am the owner of this property. We have received some assistance from FEMA and a small amount from insurance. I will be taking on much of the repairs on my own with the assistance from the community and volunteers."
- Following the flood, the cleanup crew "cut into the drywall roughly 4 feet and had to remove all flooring." Wescott says, "I will need to hire an HVAC contractor to replace my mini split condenser, a plumber for my water heater and likely more, and an electrician. I hope that my electrical will be okay because it is fairly new however since some outlets were underwater I may need to rewire. Any funds would be greatly appreciated."

## BETTE BOUTIQUE

Biltmore Village, 2 All Souls Crescent, c.1895

- A Richard Sharp Smith design, this building is a contributing structure to the Biltmore Village Cottage National Register Historic District and the local historic district. Owner Tara Hackett says: "We had our letter certifying that the structure was sound and have already forwarded that to the HRC, so that we don't encounter any delays from that standpoint."

*"Hurricane Helene arrived and with her flood waters that caused destruction in the area never seen by this generation ever. No one knew the storm would be this bad, but in its aftermath, I was to discover just how badly damaged our beautiful Western North Carolina became. The water flooded the lower part of Beacon Village, flooding most every house up to the gutters, causing complete ruination of the drywall, original hardwood floors, siding, crawl space, every appliance, HVAC, every piece of antique furniture, every photo, all clothes and every sentimental memento."*

Miah Reis, Beacon Village

We have also met with Michael Logan because it is also our intent to preserve the original windows and doors by having them removed, dried out and stored off property until they are ready to be placed. That is just an example of our intent with regard to restoration."

- When asked of the building's significance to the community, Hackett emphasizes, "our cottage is a gem that sits on one of the most predominant corners in the village. We set the tone for everyone coming in to eat at the Corner Kitchen, to grab coffee at one of the shops or to visit another small locally owned boutique. The structure is important, but the little collective of women and women-owned businesses that Bette supports is a very large part of why this rebuild is so important."

## PRIVATE RESIDENCE

Swannanoa, c.1960

- According to homeowner Matt Miller, "this is a huge project to restore the home to comfortable living conditions. It's basically down to the studs drying out any moisture we can. We have both been out of work since the storm due to loss of vehicles and the need to be at the house performing demolition, so any help would be appreciated."

## RIVERVIEW STATION

River Arts District, 191 Lyman Street, c.1902

- Owners Helaine Greene and Trudy Gould feel that "Riverview Station is the heart of the River Arts District. [We] bought the building in 1996 and have been instrumental in growing and nurturing the River Arts District. Our building has been home to countless artists over the past 28 years. Prior to the flood, it was home to more than 70 galleries, studios and small businesses and featured the work of more than 200 working artists. Our tagline is 'Where Creativity Meets Community.' Our close-knit community of artists was treasured by everyone who was a part of it."
- Per the Riverview Station website: "Our building was constructed in 1902 and originally housed the Hans Rees Tannery, which produced leather belts for industry and factories. One of the largest tanneries in the country at the time, its operation comprised both our lot and an additional property that reached east to the rail yard."

## CASABLANCA CIGAR LOUNGE

Biltmore Village, 18 Lodge Street, c.1931

- The building that now holds Casablanca Cigar Bar used to be the beloved Hot Shot Cafe, a true gem for Asheville locals. Owners Brooke and Sam Souhail note that "since we opened our doors in 2017, Casablanca has blossomed into a community gathering spot, where friendships flourish and memories are made. With a dedicated team of 12 amazing people, we've poured our hearts into this place."
- Brooke reflects: "Facing this heartbreaking setback feels overwhelming, especially when we think about the dream we've built together....Our journey has been a mix of joy and struggle. We've built our lives and businesses side by side, and while our resilience has been tested time and again—through hardships like the pandemic, losing the lease on our original store in 2022, and the recent flooding—we hold onto hope. These challenges, often out of our control,

have certainly impacted our finances, but they've also strengthened our work ethic and gratitude. We remain optimistic about what lies ahead and are determined to keep moving forward."

## PRIVATE RESIDENCE

Beacon Village, c.1948

- The house was built in 1948 as part of a development for Beacon Mill Blanket factory workers. The homeowners note the unique character of the historic neighborhood, describing its "distinctive look and feel, with all the houses having a similar layout."
- The house was flooded up above the gutters during the storm. The Swannanoa River rose over 26 feet and flooded a significant portion of their street. According to the homeowners, "Our house has been gutted to the studs by volunteers (and friends and family), sprayed for mold several times, and [the] subfloor has been removed. Current plans for the house is a complete rebuild, adding new electrical systems, HVAC, repairing any structural issues, adding walls, drywall and finishes."

## PRIVATE RESIDENCE

Beacon Village, c.1927

- When asked of the building's significance to the community, homeowners Jim and Allie Bourdy stress, "Our house is so important to our community!! This Swannanoa Street was housing for the largest blanket factory in the world and was truly the best neighborhood of people! It also has a lot of 2nd or 3rd generation homeowners that have created affordable housing options for the Asheville area." Allie says: "my husband can talk for hours about the history of the homes that we have learned over the years. We have lived in our house for 7 years and loved sharing the history of the mill housing with everyone who came to visit!"
- Their investment in the preservation of their historic home shined through their application: "My husband and I truly love our home & our neighborhood. We had so many odes to the original space that we would still love to keep like the beadboard in the hallway, the fireplaces in every room, the extra wide hallways and hopefully real wood flooring still! We would love to share the history of these homes that were destroyed and want to also help rebuild the community- any help you could give us would be great!!"

## PRIVATE RESIDENCE

Beacon Village, c.1927

- Michael Burgin's home in Beacon Village was built in 1926 and was originally worker housing for the Beacon Blanket Manufacturing plant. According to Michael, the house "still had many original materials including the hardwood floors from the 1920s."
- Like many homes in his area, the house was "completely submerged by Tropical Storm Helene. We have home insurance, but we didn't have flood insurance so we were completely denied."

## PRIVATE RESIDENCE

Beacon Village, c.1925

- For homeowner Miah Reis, Beacon Village is tied to a long legacy of family history. "I own and live(d) at...a mill house built in 1925. [It] has been a family generational home since the 1930's but was purchased by my

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great grandparents directly from Beacon Manufacturing company back in 1948. These mill houses were built by the Charles D. Owen Family, who owned Beacon Manufacturing Co, in 1925 to house their employees, after bringing their blanket manufacturing plant to Swannanoa in 1922.”

- Reis reflects: “This house holds exceptional sentimental value to me because this house not only belonged to my great grandparents, it became my grandparents’ home and it became my permanent home back in 2021. The memories abound when I think of this house and how it always felt safe when I went to visit my grandparents, throughout my life. It was the fixture of every family gathering, every crisis during winter weather where family found shelter when their homes were snowed in, every summer holiday with sleep overs, cartoons, and playing in the ‘kiddy’ pool. This house went from my safe haven when life got tough and I could get away, to my permanent home, but, as always, those feelings of nostalgia, memories and security prevailed.”
- “Hurricane Helene arrived and with her flood waters that caused destruction in the area never seen by this generation ever. No one knew the storm would be this bad, but in its aftermath, I was to discover just how badly damaged our beautiful Western North Carolina became. The water flooded the lower part of Beacon Village, flooding most every house up to the gutters, causing complete ruination of the drywall, original hardwood floors, siding, crawl space, every appliance, HVAC, every piece of antique furniture, every photo, all clothes and every sentimental memento.”

GLENN FORTUNE SCHOOL HOUSE

Black Mountain, c.1900

- Known as the “Glenn Fortune Schoolhouse” (est. 1904 - 1934), the current homeowner says that “many of the elderly people of this area went to school here back in the old days...Some of my elderly neighbors remember going to school here and have told me interesting stories on how it was then. Where the teachers podium was [in] location to the students and their desks. I believe this structure is important to the community because it represents the history of this area and how things used to be.”
- Situated on a tributary of the Broad River, “the creek flooded higher than [it has] ever been and severely damaged the land and property. The basement got flooded and created moisture problems. Certain beams must be replaced under the structure. A section of foundation got swept down in the creek and is currently missing in the back of it. In fact, the Glenn Fortune School House is hanging right over the creek! There is no land between it and the creek. Major erosion.”

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

Kenilworth, c.1927

- Homeowner Kidada Wynn describes the deep significance of her family home, which suffered structural and water damage from the storm: “My parents bought this home 27 years ago. They were transitioning out of the housing authority community into such a beautiful neighborhood. They broke generational curses of living in public housing to owning their own home, modeling to their family and others that home ownership is possible; even in the midst of racism, gentrification, opportunity inequities and redlining! They did it! They purchased their first home in THE Kenilworth area!!”
- Wynn’s goal is “to make this home insurable and, most importantly, livable again. I long to welcome my parents back to a safe, loving environment. As one of the few families of color in this historic neighborhood, my father is determined to preserve the home he’s so proud of.”

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

Beacon Village, c.1927

- Another Beacon Village homeowner noted the historical significance of the community, stating, “this neighborhood is almost 100 years old. It housed the workers from the Beacon Village blanket factory.” When asked if the structure was in imminent risk of failure, the applicant replied simply: “There is not much left to fail. Mold is currently a problem.”

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

Kenilworth, c.1920

- The homeowner explains the historical significance of her family home in Kenilworth, as it was “initially owned by J.M. Chiles and sits in close proximity to the Chiles House located at 21 Chiles Ave.”
- The family is taking on “repairs of structural damage as a result of a downed tree. The damaged roof led to significant internal water damage and mold. Funds will be used for mold remediation and gutting of affected walls and ceilings.”

7 ALL SOULS CRESCENT

Biltmore Village, c.1895

- 7 All Souls Crescent is a contributing structure to the Biltmore Village Cottage National Register Historic District and the local historic district. Owner Sherri Snelson notes that “this building is one of the original shop houses in Biltmore Village, built in the early 1900s. It is surrounded on either side by similar structures, with Corner Kitchen and Well Bred Bakery across the street and is within one block of All Souls Crescent church.”
- Describing the flood damage, she says: “The entire ground floor was inundated with water during Hurricane Helene, with water reaching to within a few inches of the ground floor ceiling. We have completed a complete muck-out/tear-out of the ground floor and now are commencing the process of rebuilding.”

14 LODGE STREET

Biltmore Village, c.1931

- Owners Matthew and Heather Wright explain that their building at 14 Lodge Street “was devastated with flooding...We have signed an agreement with [a contractor] to have the building mucked, gutted, sanitized, and dried out in preparation for a rebuild.”
- This building is a contributing structure to the Biltmore Village local historic district. Matthew says, “Heather and I are born-and-raised (2nd generation) Asheville. Everything in Biltmore



Village carries a historical significance that I'm so very proud of. I pray the rebuild of the Village will maintain the uniqueness and as much authenticity as possible of the original intent.”

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

Beacon Village, c.1946

- Beacon Village homeowners Jessica and Jefferey Fager describe the damage to their property: “Our home flooded 13 inches in the living area and our basement was completely filled. All HVAC, electric, hot water heater, floors, bottom halves of walls, kitchen cabinets, bathroom, and furniture need to be replaced.”
- When asked to share why this structure is important to the community, Jessica simply yet poignantly replied: “It is our home.” Upon receiving a preservation grant, the Fagers responded that they “are here working every single day...Thank you so much. This will help us so much. I want to sleep in my own bed in my own house so much right now. This will help us get there.”

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

Kenilworth, c.1899

- Baxter Buchanan explains that her home “is one of the oldest residential properties, predating the neighborhood of Kenilworth. It is featured in Cabins & Castles...being built around 1910 but other documents have it as 1899. I learned from preservation Asheville blog, that this style of architecture came to the area thanks to A.J. Downing, and have ordered his books to help inform our restorations.”
- Due to severe tree damage from the storm, “on the exterior we will need to replace roof, gutters, porch floor, railing, beams, masonry stone work foundation, and exterior tongue and groove ceiling boards. On the interior we have 2 rooms with ceiling beadboard to replace and some water damaged plaster to repair. My hope is to restore using the historic appropriate materials.”

ABBINGTON GREEN INN

Montford, c.1905

- The Inn’s historic structure is contributing to the Montford Area National Register Historic District and the local historic district as the Jackson Peyton House (1909). The building was also awarded the Griffin Award by PSABC for excellence in Historic Preservation in 1994.
- Owners Dean Whiteford and Cherie Thorn are working to address damage to the house and carriage house structures: “Specifically, we are applying for help with the main house’s front porch repair. The damage is at our entrance and visible from the street...Excessive rain and wind from the storm caused water to get into the roof structure and damage the drywall ceiling below. It is recommended that the existing roofing material be removed, the affected sheathing be replaced (assumes no more than 20%), and new roofing roll and flashing be installed. The affected area of the ceiling below (approx. 30%) will be replaced with T&G pine boards, which will be primed and painted. Affected trim will also be replaced, as needed, and primed and painted.”

ANDAAZ

Biltmore Village, 28 Hendersonville Road, c.1925

- Andaaz’s historic building is on the National Register of Historic Places and is contributing to the local historic district. According to business owner Raj Singh: “the landlord is doing the exterior of the building and we are doing the interiors...The damage is so severe and at this juncture everything helps. Everything in the restaurant is gone so we have to build everything again which will involve restoration of the building interior and also we will obviously be paying an architect.”

YMCA BLUE RIDGE ASSEMBLY

Black Mountain, c. 1911-1915

- Beth Dye of the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly staff describes how “water and debris from the mountain slammed into both Gymnasium and Eureka Hall. The Gymnasium was left barely standing with two and a half columns

- missing and Eureka Hall has a large hole torn into its foundation with debris and water flooding the basement. We took immediate action to stabilize both buildings so we did not lose them completely.”
- Both buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. She continues that “these structures are important to the Buncombe County community both for the services and work we provide as a nonprofit and for the historical contribution to the history of Buncombe County. We were founded in 1906 with the mission to bring young people together to build relationships, exchange ideas and become great leaders in their communities. We have continued to further that mission for 118 years.”
- The Gymnasium has been stabilized but the long-term future of the building remains in question. “We have further stabilization work and structural investigation to do. Eureka has also been stabilized but will require extensive restoration and repair work.”

THE LION AND THE ROSE

Montford, c.1907

- The Lion and the Rose is a contributing structure to the Montford Area National Register Historic District and the local historic district. Owners Karen and Steve Wilson say that this is “the first and longest running B&B in Montford.”
- To mitigate damage to the structure resulting from the storm, they will need to “remove tiles and linoleum, remove furniture and other items contaminated by water damage, remove 4’ of drywall and remove any mold. Remove the drywall from the ceiling in the guest room where water damage has occurred and remove mold. Restore the drywall and flooring once mold remediation is completed.”





# HISTORIC PRESERVATION AS RECOVERY

By Annie Rubel  
Founder, Heritage Emergency Management, Inc.

We know from numerous studies that the recovery of cultural heritage is essential for communities to recover from disasters—psychologically, spiritually, and financially. From our museums and historic sites to our historic places of worship, to the historic neighborhoods and culture districts that give our towns their unique identities and appeal—Historic Preservation is itself a tool for recovery, not just a priority or goal. The whole cultural heritage field has a deeply significant role to play after disasters, but for the purposes of this article, I would like to speak to historic property owners who are about to, or are already in the midst of stabilizing, repairing, and restoring their buildings.

Emergency Management, as you have all become too familiar with, is best understood as a cycle. There are “phases”= Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, Recovery. But these are cyclical and cannot be seen as a linear process. They can also run parallel and concurrently. So, as you embark upon recovery, it is important to consider mitigation and preparedness in your plans and efforts. Some refer to this as building back better. It is a matter of boosting resilience and being strategic in decision-making.

Understandably, we just want to get back to normal life, clear the mud, get rid of the evidence, as quickly as possible. But we can risk doing more harm if we move too quickly and don’t have a solid plan. In historic preservation, with historic structures, it is even more important to document, assess, prioritize, and ensure we are working with the best information and decision-making in place.

## Slow Down, a challenging but wise approach

A general rule of thumb with historic buildings is you want to make changes and decisions slowly. This may go against our instincts, but historic buildings want us to take our time. We must act quickly to stop the source of damage, secure a building envelope, get air flowing, and stabilize the most at-risk elements, but once these steps have been taken, step back. We can do more harm than good when we use brute force (or direct heat or sandblasting!) to rescue historic structures.

Carefully document and assess damage, then determine what can be salvaged and what must be discarded. Err on the side of preservation—things often look worse than they are, and good decisions are very hard to make until elements and materials are dry and clean. Water-damaged wood floors, for instance, can settle and flatten with some time even if they seem totally ruined at first. A metaphor, but also a material truth.

When we go slowly, we also increase our ability to take advantage of more funding sources and access to professional expertise. Otherwise, we miss opportunities to make longer-term strategic decisions that boost resilience and make our money go further.

In the most practical and immediate ways, going slowly can include setting an alarm to take breaks, drink water, get a snack, and regularly check in with a friend or colleague throughout the day. This prevents injury, mistakes, and unnecessary losses. But in a broader sense, we must see ourselves in this moment as ushering in a new chapter in the building’s history. It’s the beginning of a marathon process and windows can be repaired as long as we don’t chuck them at the first sign of rot.

Take the time to create systems and plans. Document everything you do—before touching or changing things, during, and after. Record and track where things are going as you salvage and move belongings and pieces of buildings around. Create a data logging system to ensure you are keeping track of your windows, doors, books, heirlooms. Even better, form a team and dish out roles and responsibilities—stay consistent.

And this cannot be overstated—in a disaster, whether personal or community-wide, we are not ourselves. We are not thinking as clearly as we do under other circum-

stances, as clear as that may or may not be. You may notice you are clumsier, fog-gier, jumpier, less cooperative and quicker to frustration—this is all very natural and should be acknowledged and honored. Giving ourselves as much time to make decisions as possible will lead to better decision-making and a healthier recovery.

## [Only you can] Prevent Secondary Disasters...

Unfortunately, secondary disasters are common during recovery efforts. These range from worksite injuries to theft or vandalism to major structural fires. There are simple ways to eliminate or mitigate these risks by taking clear preventative steps. This is another example of why taking the time to plan is so critical.

**NOTE:** Even experienced contractors need to think through these things more explicitly than usual when it comes to historic buildings. Notre Dame was being renovated by a very experienced, highly skilled company when it caught fire. But especially after disasters, we are often DIYing or working with volunteers, and are not firing on all cylinders, so do not miss the chance to actively manage these risks.

## FOR EXAMPLE:

Are you working on a building that is surrounded by abandoned structures? If so, consider security risks and the greater need for reliable communication if you were to require help.

Are you working on a building where windows have been boarded up and the HVAC system isn’t functional? If so, consider how you will keep the building ventilated both for the safety of you and anyone working in the building and to prevent the build-up of moisture, vapor, or gas.

Are you working around unknown hazards? Consider having the soil, air, or water tested through a remediation, environmental monitoring, or occupational health and safety company. You can’t properly protect yourself if you do not know the hazards.

Are you working with volunteers or as a family? Designate someone who must be responsible for all people on site. Make sure everyone knows who this person is and that they are dedicated to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of everyone working, including keeping track of who is onsite. If that person has to leave, ensure they transfer the responsibility to another person before leaving.

## Fire risk during historic building renovations

According to studies conducted after the fire at Notre Dame de Paris in 2019, around 80% of fires in historic buildings occur during renovation or restoration activity. Despite the assumption that it is often due to the carelessness of workers, this appears to be untrue and is not a helpful way to look at the risk. It is likely more

commonly attributed to seemingly innocuous things such as leaving tool batteries charging overnight. Usually when things go awry, there are numerous sources of risk and a series of compounding vulnerabilities, but there are a few easy ways historic building owners can lower (mitigate) their risk of fire during renovation and restoration projects.

**Note:** You certainly want to lower the risk of fire, but you also want to improve the chances of firefighters being able to quickly access the building to fight any fires that may occur. Keep this access in mind, especially to the building itself and to the attic/roof system.

1. Unplug all extension cords, tools, and battery chargers at the end of each workday or during breaks if no one will be onsite.
2. Ensure all extension cords are heavy-duty and rated for construction. Ensure they are in good condition and you are not running cords longer than is safe.
3. Store trash and debris properly. Remove from site as frequently as possible. Do not leave trash or debris piled up inside or against structures.
4. Keep all tools and materials orga-

nized, out of pathways, and secure from unauthorized people. If you find yourself stepping over things or zigzagging throughout the day, reconsider the way your worksite is laid out.

5. Store all chemicals properly and dirty/oily rags in a fire-proof waste container.
6. Keep roads, driveways, and pathways to the building as clear as possible even if this means storing materials in a less than convenient location.
7. If there is no power to the building, still ensure that there are battery-powered smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms to alert people onsite to these common hazards.
8. When using generators, truly take the time to read the directions and understand how to safely use the equipment. It is the cause of so many fires and injuries. Don’t take this for granted.

These steps will also reduce the risk of worksite injuries, chemical spills, and other emergencies.

## Building first aid/first response:

Though this phase may have passed for most people within the context of Hurricane Helene, this could be relevant at any moment and is a helpful reference in the future. It applies to major disasters, but also things as common as burst pipes. We don’t need the worst to occur to benefit from emergency management principles.

Assuming the building has been cleared by first responders and all occupants have been accounted for, if applicable, follow this checklist before entering the building:

1. Do you have a partner? Do not enter a damaged space alone.
2. Are utilities shut off as necessary? Double check.
3. Do you have the proper PPE? Seriously.
4. Do you have a reliable form of communication or a plan for contact?
5. Do you have a way to document? Pens, paper, phone, etc.?
6. Do you have a plan? Don’t start a project or phase without a plan.

## Plan, then communicate about your plan, then plan again.

1. Create a plan:
  - a. What is your objective? Ensure this is achievable and take things in bite sized pieces.
  - b. What and who will you need to achieve this?
  - c. How will you acquire those needed resources?
  - d. How will you determine when you have achieved the objective?
2. Make sure everyone understands the objective and knows the plan.
3. Enact plan.
4. Debrief, reflect, and prepare for next phase with a new plan!

**NOTE:** I do this when hosting a dinner party, so you can bet I do this when embarking on a building rescue project.

## The nitty gritty, concrete, must do, please note, follow this:

**Note, some of these steps can be flipped around to a degree but keep the general structure in place.**

1. Document and record all damage before moving things or intervening. You will need this for insurance purposes, but also because it is unlikely you will remember much in the emotional and adrenaline-filled moment.
2. Secure the building envelope—tarp over large openings in walls or roof damage. 90-lb rolls of roofing paper is better than nothing and Tyvek or other building wrap can be effective on wall openings.
3. Ventilate the building as soon as possible and get the drying process started—open windows and doors, create air movement by using fans and dehumidifiers if possible.
  - a. Use air filters in your windows to keep unwanted dust and hazards from entering the building. Using at least MERV 8 furnace filters in windows will provide helpful air filtration.

b. Keep in mind that with air movement, you can spread hazards and contaminants around. Consider how to filter these or contain them such as putting plastic between rooms, closing off vents, etc.

- c. Use dehumidifiers, but not whole-building desiccant dehumidification. The ideal humidity level is relative to temperature. In general, though, a good range for humidity after a water event, depending on temperature, is between 30%-50% in a residential setting to prevent mold growth (this does not take creature comfort into account). Museums and buildings with artifacts are best kept between 40%-60%.
- d. Note: It is possible to over-dry a building and to dry a building too quickly, which can damage historic materials.

4. Stop to assess and prioritize. After immediate stabilization, you have bought yourself time to stop and put plans together. You will not be able to do everything, so get strategic and intentional.
5. Do not pick anything up until you know where you will put it down.

a. Make sure you have designated a safe place to put salvaged things—plan for this. Taking the time to establish this holding or triage area will save you time in the long run, so don’t skip this step.

b. Designate a place for trash and debris away from the building, not blocking driveways or paths.

c. Create a documentation and tracking process so you can stay organized.

6. Separate contaminated objects from uncontaminated ones—wet away from dry, moldy away from clean, etc.

7. Properly dispose of wet or contaminated insignificant\* materials such as insulation, drywall/sheetrock, carpets.

a. \*Do not dispose of meaningful or significant things until they are dry and you have determined if they are salvageable—you may be surprised how much is salvageable and it is worth taking your time on making those decisions even if things look bleak. We often lose more than we need to in a hasty clean-out, muck-out process.

8. If possible, rinse mud and debris off architectural elements and belongings while still wet.

9. Use the most non-invasive cleaning methods possible—avoid harsh chemicals, sandblasting, power-washing at high settings, scrapers, etc. until you have the chance to do research or engage a technical specialist.

10. Salvage and retain architectural features such as interior wood, plaster elements, windows, doors, etc. These are much more salvageable than you may believe, and it makes historic buildings more resilient to damage than contemporary ones.

11. If you have access to a freezer, freezing wet objects, particularly most types of paper, can buy you time to salvage those items by suspending the deterioration.

In summary, there is hope in systems and procedures. When we are faced with enormity and chaos, generally two things can happen: we freeze, or we go into “hero” mode and can cause injury or damage if we’re not focused on our objectives and planning for risk management. We will never know what we have spared ourselves from or how much worse it could have been without this planning, but we all want to make sure we’ve done whatever is in our power. Our work will always be imperfect, but by learning and considering these principles, we can limit our risks and mitigate our losses...and hopefully find healing along the road to recovery.

For guidance and support in developing Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response plans for your families, businesses, or institutions, contact Annie Rubel at [arubel@heritageemergencymanagement.com](mailto:arubel@heritageemergencymanagement.com)

# HISTORIC HOME TOUR

## ★ North Liberty Street ★

Join us for our Annual Historic Home Tour in the Chestnut Hill Historic District in February 2025! We are excited to offer 5 charming homes on North Liberty Street this year. Our Home Tour is in conjunction with the 38th Annual National Arts and Crafts Conference at the Grove Park Inn.

Chestnut Hill is a relatively compact late-19th century and early-20th century residential neighborhood that was once an extension of the residential streets that began north of downtown Asheville. Most of the houses in the neighborhood were built after the 1880s when rail transportation opened Asheville to tourists and investors. Almost all of the 200 buildings within the neighborhood were originally dwellings. Architecturally, the houses range from the local in-town vernacular to nationally popular architectural styles, like Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Shingle Style. At least two locally-important architects worked in the neighborhood – J. A. Tennent and Richard Sharp Smith. The houses range in size, but many of the finer residences housed state and national figures. Besides a continuous growth in permanent residents, Asheville during this time experienced annual infusions of thousands of tourists. Records indicate that a number of Chestnut Hill “cottages” were built as high-quality rental properties to accommodate the visitors. ☞

**Saturday & Sunday Feb. 22-23**  
**1:00-5:00pm both days**  
**Tickets start at \$35** members/local  
[psabc.org/arts-crafts-home-tour](https://psabc.org/arts-crafts-home-tour)



# Save the date for our Time Traveling Gala on May 31, 2025 at IntheOaks!

## TIME TRAVELING GALA IN BLACK MOUNTAIN

It may feel like déjà vu, but this incredible 24,000 square foot manor house is too special not to share. After having to cancel our event here in September due to the storm, we feel so fortunate to be able to throw this party for you. Join us for a special night of celebrating preservation and raising funds for our impactful grant program.

Keep an eye out for ticket information and sponsorship opportunities in the new year. Don't miss your chance to explore this prohibition-era gem!

*Special thanks to Montreat College and all our amazing vendors for helping us (finally) make this happen. ☞*



## 2025 GRIFFIN AWARDS CANCELED

In consideration of the damage caused by Hurricane Helene, May of 2025 will be too soon to celebrate the recovery from the storm that we are all looking forward to. So please keep track of the wonderful preservation projects in our community and we will be back in 2026 to celebrate them all!

*In lieu of the Griffin Awards, the 2025 Time Traveling Gala has been scheduled for May 31st, 2025 – you won't want to miss it!*



continued from page 4

old Black Mountain Highway (U.S. 70-now “Old U. S. 70”) was rerouted from just west of Swannanoa to Black Mountain. The new route, which eliminated two bridges across the Swannanoa, was constructed in a straight line between the Swannanoa River to the north and the Beacon plant and village to the south.<sup>42</sup> Also, in 1940 a new eight-inch public water line was installed to supply the two hundred houses in the mill village. The new line supplemented Beacon Manufacturing's existing private six-inch line.<sup>43</sup>

In November of 1941, just a month before the United States would officially enter the war, Beacon Manufacturing was awarded a contract by the War Department for “\$163,569 worth of cotton blankets to be manufactured at Swannanoa”.<sup>44</sup> As the war progressed, numbers of Beacon Manufacturing employees (men and women) were called into service. The familial-like bond of Beacon Manufacturing with its employees manifested itself during these times, as not only did the employees actively participate in buying war bonds and helping with the Red Cross Relief efforts, but also, they continued to care for those serving. When a small group of the employees came up with the idea, in December of 1942, to send a Christmas gift to each of 360 former fellow Beacon employees who were in active service, “the idea spread so swiftly” throughout the plant that within two days the employees had raised \$1,900 towards the effort. When Charles D. Owen, heard of the employees' plan, he decided that in addition to the gift boxes, that the company would

also send a check for a “substantial amount of money” to each individual serviceman as well.<sup>45</sup> This practice was carried through the war years. Both ensuing Christmases, 1943 and 1944, Beacon Manufacturing reported having over 600 employees serving in the Armed Services, all who would be receiving checks and gift boxes.<sup>46</sup>

With the end of the war in 1945, returning veterans were encouraged and aided by the U. S. Government in transitioning back into civilian life. In fact, consumerism, such as the buying of houses and cars and furniture were encouraged as an economic stimulus to renewing America's “prosperity”. Federal programs were developed, such as Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans and the GI Bill, giving many returning veterans the desire and ability to buy a home. This post-war promotion of individual home ownership, combined with the pre-war decline of “welfare capitalism” would greatly affect the future of Beacon Village. One of the many programs initiated in the “first hundred days” of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's first term of office, was the “Cotton Textile Code”. The code was obviously enacted by anti-company-town proponents. The new code advocated for the abolishment of company-sponsored housing, with shameless and blunt statements in the code such as: “There is something feudal and repugnant to American principles in the practice of employer ownership of employee homes”.<sup>47</sup> The code suggested replacing the employees' housing benefit with an increased wage. Stopping short of prohibiting and outlawing company towns, the code required the companies “to consider the question of plans for eventual employee ownership of homes in mill villages”.<sup>48</sup>

“Following a trend in industries throughout the nation”, reported the Asheville Times on October 14, 1948, “the Beacon manufacturing company is selling 231 dwelling units in the company's mill village in Swannanoa to its employees”.<sup>49</sup> The current employee occupants of each house purchased their house from Beacon for an average price of \$300 per room (excepting kitchens, pantries, and bathrooms) for the older houses, and \$400 to \$600 for the newer homes.<sup>50</sup> In the end, Beacon sold 162 dwellings to its employees. Some of the houses did not have adequate separation or yard space to be used as private homes. I suspect some of the unsellable dwellings were those which had been built directly in front of the mill with little yard space. The negotiations and deeds for all 162 dwellings were drawn up separately, although all deeds were registered on the same day, November 23, 1948.<sup>51</sup> The Beacon Manufacturing Company was one of the first textile companies in the area to sell off its mill village houses. The Sayles Bleachery village houses in nearby Asheville were not sold off to employees until 1962. The Champion Paper Mill village at Canton, NC, west of Asheville, did not sell off their mill houses to its employees until the company was sold in 1999. Enka Park, the mill village of the Dutch-owned company, ENKA in Candler, NC west of Asheville, was not sold off until 2001 when Enka's successor BASF sold the village to Biltmore Farms, to be incorporated into the new Biltmore Lake residential development.

The Owen family sold out its interest in Beacon Manufacturing to National Distillers in 1969, and the company was later sold to Cannon Mills and eventually Fieldcrest Cannon. In 2001, Beacon Blankets, then owned by Pillowtex, was sold to an investment group made up of current and former employees and an Asheville investor. Unfortunately for Beacon Blan-

kets and its remaining three hundred employees, just a year later, in 2002, the company shut down the Beacon Mill and moved its production to its plant in Westminster, SC. Then in 2003, the huge, abandoned mill caught fire and was destroyed.

The adjacent former mill village houses survived the 2002 mill fire and continued to be bought and sold. But exactly one hundred years after the first houses were built in 1924, a record-breaking catastrophic flood in September 2024, caused by hurricane “Helene”, almost destroyed the entire “lower village”. The flood waters completely submerged some of the houses up to their roofs. The aftermath was that some of those houses had to be condemned immediately after the flood, but even the affected houses that were not condemned, had to be emptied out and stripped back to their framing and left to dry out. Tons of polluted mud and sludge inside the houses had to be cleared out. Some property owners have accepted low offer buyouts for their properties-but those houses will most likely be demolished. However, the fate of the remaining historic houses is still in dire jeopardy, as many of the homeowners did not have flood insurance (the village was not in the 100-year flood plain), and/or have not received enough FEMA or insurance funds to rebuild. The Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County has aided in the rebuilding of Beacon Village through its post-flood “Hurricane Helene Recovery Grant Program”, which was established specifically to help owners of damaged historic structures rebuild. ☞

To see the photo credits and footnotes for this article please visit [psabc.org/architectural-tidbits/](https://psabc.org/architectural-tidbits/)

There you will find this and many other articles about Buncombe County's built environment.

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